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SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE CONDUCT OF A MISSION.

EDITED BY

THE SOCIETY OF S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,

AT COWLEY, OXFORD.



THE leading idea of a Mission is to bring the great eternal truths which concern the salvation of the soul so prominently before men's eyes, and to din the message of God so plainly in their ears, that, at least for once, invisible things may seem as true as visible ones, and the voice of God louder than the hubbub of the world. This is to be effected by concentrating all the spiritual powers of the Church upon one place and one time. The time must not be too short, or the impression is not deep enough—nor too long, lest there be a reaction. Experience shows that twelve days is certainly not too long.

The two great weapons of the Church in this attack are, prayer and preaching. With one we compel God, with the other man. Joshua wars in the valley, while Moses intercedes on the mount. The exercises of the Mission may all be reduced to these two heads, and they must be prosecuted with vigour, both by the clergy and also by the pious laity.

Preparation for the Mission.

The people should be informed beforehand that the advantage of a special season of grace is to be offered to them, and

urged to make use of it; and this may be done both in sermons and parochial visits, and by the distribution of handbills. Also meetings may be held of people of the same occupation, or of fathers, or of mothers, explaining and inviting them to it. But especially those who are devout should be engaged to unite in prayer for it—and this either by meeting at certain times for prayer, by the use in private of certain special prayers, or by the devoting of a certain number of days—say nine—in a very marked way to intercession on behalf of the Mission. Perhaps the best preparation is to combine all these by

- (1) Giving to all who will use it a little printed form of prayer, to be said alone or at family prayers.
- (2) Inviting people to a special meeting for intercession one evening in the week.
- (3) Pledging the devout few who are willing and able to keep a Special Preparatory Season of Intercessory Prayer.

This may be kept obviously in many ways. One way is subjoined.

Rules for a Special Season of Intercession.

Those who keep it promise to

- (A) Attend the Holy Eucharist, and either Matins or Evensong, every day.
- (B) Each day, at seven different times, say one "Our Father," in honour successively of the seven precious Bloodsheddings of our LORD.
- (C) On two days make some act of fasting or mortification.
- (D) Make one offering of money for some pious object.

All these to be offered to GOD with the intention of obtaining a blessing on the Mission.

But let all be brought to pray in such manner as they best can, using any other method which may be approved.

The Mission itself.

The first weapon being prayer, those who have been praying before will not fail to continue their prayers during the Mission, and the faithful should be especially urged to attend the Holy Eucharist with this intention—whether they communicate or not. Both to give them opportunity according to their hours of work of attending, and also for the sake of the benefit resulting from an increase in the number of Celebrations, there should if possible be as many Celebrations daily as there are priests to celebrate. If Matins and Evensong are usually said publicly in the Church, they should be continued at the same hours, unless they interfere with the special Mission services. The Sunday services would also remain unaltered, except by addition.

Special Exercises of the Mission.

I. *The Mission Sermon.*—This is the chief of them, and in general should be at the hour when most people can attend—say 7.30 or 8 p.m. It may be preceded by a few Collects and a couple of Hymns; or, when the people are *at all* used to the forms of the Church service, by an abridged Evensong—*e.g.*, Lord's Prayer, 51st and 130th Psalms, special Lessons selected by the preacher—from 6 to 20 verses each—Canticles, Creed, lesser Litany, &c., as far as 3rd Collect, and a Hymn. The same preacher will preach a course of Sermons, beginning on the Sunday evening, and lasting to the end of the Mission. They will be on the simple great leading truths—the Soul—Sin—Hell—Death—Judgement—Repentance—Salvation through JESUS—the Church—Heaven. After the Sermon is a Litany sung kneeling, that the people may give vent to their feelings in prayer. Then comes a Hymn and the Blessing.

After the Mission Service, as many as possible should be induced to attend the Instruction Class, the Bible Class, or the Prayer Meeting, any or all of which may be held at the discretion of the Parish Priest.

II. *The Instruction Class.*—When persons' feelings have been wrought upon by the Sermon to care for the salvation of their

souls, one must be careful to show them what they are to do to be saved; and for this purpose it is well to hold an Instruction Class in the Church immediately after the service. To the *first* of these *all* are invited—nay, earnestly begged—if possible to stay, that it may be understood by them what its nature is. But after the first evening it is explained that this Class of Instruction is not intended for persons who do not accept the teaching of the Church, but for those who wish to *learn of her*—either initially or more perfectly—the way of salvation. Consequently, they are asked to give in their names to some of the clergy or lay helpers if they wish to attend. It is not necessary strictly to enforce this rule. It is sufficient for the Class to feel that they are not present as critics, but as children of the Church, and for the clergy to have a list which may be very valuable to them after the Mission.

The Priest who takes this Class comes into Church in his cassock or ordinary dress. He brings all those who remain for it into one convenient part of the Church, close together, and walks about amongst them, speaking quite simply and familiarly to them as friends. He takes them through a course of instruction on the practical duties of the religion of a Christian. He explains how to pray—the benefit of the Sacraments—how to prepare for Holy Communion—how to examine oneself—how to make a confession—what a good confession is—how to conquer various sins—how to meditate—the duties of almsgiving and fasting—and any others which it may seem advisable to dwell on. He supports what he teaches from Holy Scripture, and makes it clear by illustration, and ends by prayer, which had better in general be extempore. The whole exercise should not exceed half an hour. Though best in the evening, this Class may of course be held at other times.

III. *The Prayer Meeting.*—This exercise also should immediately follow the Sermon. It may either be instead of the Class, or take place at the same time and under the guidance of another Priest. If the Schoolroom is used for it, some fresh poor may be brought in who are shy of attending Church, for this is an exercise eminently suited to reach the most ignorant and debased.

The Priest begins by a short address, which in character is like the peroration of the Sermon, and then implores all who

have neglected the care of their souls to pray earnestly for the help of God. He leads them altogether at first, but afterwards leaves them to pray in silence separately, whilst he goes round to speak quietly with each about his soul. Other clergy help him in this work, and at the end the meeting is dismissed with a common prayer and a blessing.

IV. *The Bible Class*, like the Instruction Class, is an exercise which may be held at any time of the day. It may take the place of the Instruction Class or Prayer Meeting after the Sermon, or may be held, for the sake of married women, servants, &c., in the afternoon. It differs from the Instruction Class in being open to all, whether unbelievers, dissenters, or Church people, and consequently in observing a certain reticence about the mysteries of the faith. It consists of an exposition of Holy Scripture, plain, familiar, and affectionate—tending to lead people gradually on, by showing them that there is much more hidden in Holy Scriptures than they who are not taught by the Church can discern for themselves.

V. *The Meditation* is an exercise which is much valued by pious persons of all ranks of society. For the sake of the poor, and those who attend early services, it may be given at an early hour—say 6, 7, or 8 in the morning—being preceded and followed by a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. For the sake of those who have more leisure, it may be held at 11 or 12 o'clock in the day. If early, it should not last more than 20 minutes; if later, it may be two or three times as long.

After singing the *Veni Creator* together, the Preacher seats himself facing and close to the congregation, who sit or kneel as they please.

The exercise consists of a consideration of some truth in the way of soliloquy, interspersed with colloquy or prayer to God. At the end all kneel for a few minutes of silent prayer, and then repeat together the *Anima Christi*, or some other suitable form.

VI. *The Conference* is a Sermon well reasoned and carefully prepared, especially addressed to the thinking portion of society. It deals with the objections commonly put forward against the scheme and parts of revealed religion; or, taking a positive line, it

works out the system of the Catholic religion in its bearings upon the life of man. It evidently needs a preacher of intellectual ability as well as of earnestness and eloquence, and is suited to a Church which could obtain a morning, midday, or afternoon congregation. No more prelude or conclusion is necessary than the preacher can give from the pulpit.

VII. *The Notice* is a small but very important part of a Mission. It is given immediately before the Mission Sermon, either by the conductor of the Mission or by the Parish Priest. He speaks to them of any practical matters belonging to the Mission, the attendance of the people—their prayers—the subjects which are going to be brought before them—the hours and places at which the clergy may be seen privately—the nature of the Instruction Class or the Prayer Meeting, &c.—anything of this sort which he wishes particularly they should attend to. It should not occupy more than two or three minutes, and should not encroach on the province of the Sermon, but be as simple, direct, and unadorned as he can make it, consistently with his earnest desire that they should profit by the Mission.

Dealing with Individuals.

This is the most important part of a Mission. The public teaching must be supplemented by this, or the fruit will be comparatively small. Souls cannot be saved in masses. Each must be dealt with alone. The good shepherd will take up the erring sheep one by one on his shoulders, to carry them back to the fold. Throughout the whole of the Mission, from beginning to end, the clergy, both parochial and missionary, must give all their spare time to seeking out those who are impressed, and leading them one by one, according to their needs, in the way of salvation.

In this work, however, there are great obstacles :—

(1) *A natural reserve and hesitation about intruding on a Clergyman.*—The Mission Priests will endeavour to break down this barrier, by showing the true relation between priest and people, and their own desire to be simply the servants of the people for JESUS' sake.

(2) *A false shame of letting others know that they have been moved.*—This wall must be battered forcibly and unsparingly at the time of a Mission, until it falls before the power of God.

(3) *The want of places in which to see people privately.*—Besides the vestry, there are sometimes other rooms belonging to a Church which may be used for this purpose. If not, it is well to curtain off some small space in a retired part to be used for this. If both Priest and penitent speak in a whisper, there are few churches in which arrangements may not be made for several Priests either to talk with persons or hear confessions without danger of being overheard.

The devout laity, both men and women, as well as the parochial clergy, may be of great use in bringing people to speak with the Mission clergy about their souls. To this end it is well for the Mission Priest to meet all who are willing to help in the Mission either on the Saturday before the Mission begins, or on the first Sunday, that he may make their acquaintance and urge them to bring others to him.

Confessions.

The clergy must be prepared to hear confessions at all times during a Mission, from morning to night. Those persons who have attended the Instruction Classes in Church will not in general need any further instruction in private before making their confession. No one, as a general rule, should be put off who comes in earnest to make confession. Illiterate people will always require the help of the Priest to question them, and would not be better prepared if they had a longer time given them. Those who come with penitence, but without sufficient self-examination, may be required to come again to complete their confession. But the troubled soul should always be allowed to unburden itself at once.

To economise time the shortest form of the Confiteor should be used. The Priest should never be impatient with any penitent whose confession really needs a long time, which will sometimes happen, though he may find many who can be heard very quickly without any injury. He will arrange with women to come as much as possible in the day, since men frequently only have leisure at night.

Further advice as to hearing Confessions will be found in the "Priest's Prayer Book," and "The Priest in Absolution" (*Masters*). Also see "Pardon through the Precious Blood" (*Palmer*).

Fixing the Results of the Mission.

All persons who wish to profit by the Mission should be urged to take some practical step to fix their good intentions. Some will give their names to the Parish Priest to be prepared for Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, or Holy Communion, as the case may be. Some will join some Parochial Guild or Religious Association. Some who have been hitherto living pious lives will make definite resolutions for a more perfect service of God. Some who have been given to excessive drinking, may make solemn promises of abstinence for a limited time, or until the promise is withdrawn. If the Parish Priest has been intending to introduce or form in his parish any new Religious Association, the end of the Mission will be a good time for starting it.

The last Service of the Mission

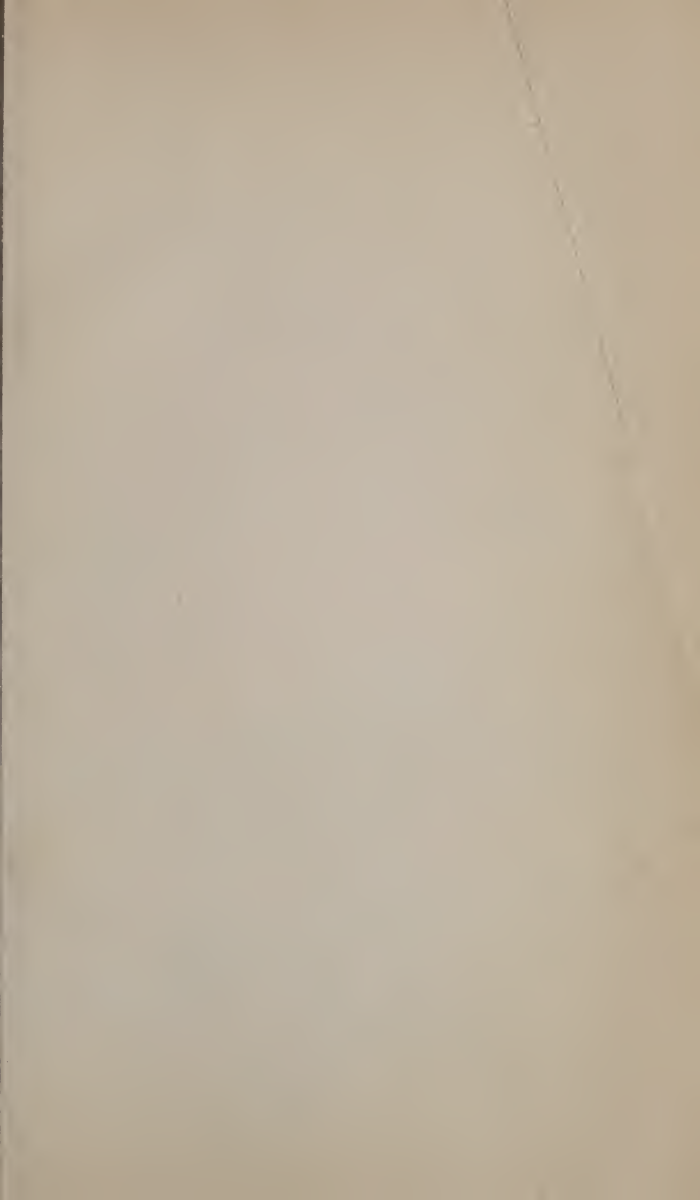
should be a celebration of the Holy Eucharist at the hour when *most* can attend—even if it be necessary to have it as early as 5 a.m. All who have profited by the Mission should come and offer up their resolutions to God together, and probably many will communicate.

Handbills

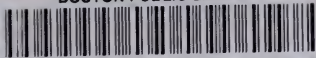
should be circulated containing the hours of the services, &c., and the subjects of the Sermons, with a short Pastoral Letter upon the Mission.

If *Out-door Preaching* is practised, it should be with the object of bringing people to the Mission Services.

It is well to get some person to stand outside the Church during the Mission, and sell books of devotion, tracts, &c., which may help on the work. Especially one little book should be sold, containing the special Hymns and Litany to be sung during the Mission, Prayers to be used during the continuance of it, with a Preface explaining what the Mission is.



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